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**REMARKS  
BY  
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FAREWELL LUNCHEON  
AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
SONARGAON, DHAKA  
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AmCham President Aftabul Islam

AmCham Treasurer Hasan Mazumder

... and valued guests who, like me, believe that Bangladesh could be and should be Asia's next economic tiger

Asalaamu laikum, namaskar and good afternoon

I stand before you this afternoon for the last time as America's ambassador to wonderful Bangladesh. A week from now, Grace and I will board an airplane and fly off into the unknown skies of the future as I begin a new life as a retiree.

It seems like only yesterday that I stood before you at my maiden AmCham appearance as ambassador and shared with you my thoughts and vision of America's partnership with Bangladesh ... Bangladesh, the world's eighth largest country, its third largest Muslim-majority country, a country that is a moderate, tolerant, secular, pluralistic alternative to the violent extremism that is scarring other parts of the world.

I am pleased that much of that vision has been realized over the past three years.

I am pleased that America's partnership with Bangladesh is today broader, deeper, stronger than ever.

This partnership was institutionalized with the establishment of the annual Partnership Dialogue during Secretary Clinton's 2012 visit to Bangladesh. We held the third annual Partnership Dialogue in Washington six weeks ago, and it was a powerful success in reviewing and assessing the partnership and in charting the course forward. We also held this year for the third time both the Security Dialogue and Bilateral Defense Dialogue; in April, we held the first annual Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement ... TICFA ... discussions. All of these encounters energized, redirected and focused our partnership.

When I spoke to the Center for Non-Resident Bangladeshis yesterday, some in the audience were surprised with my assertion that America's partnership with Bangladesh is today broader, deeper, stronger than ever and that partnership goes from strength to strength with each passing day.

Perhaps, you, too, are surprised; perhaps, you think that I am merely chanting diplomatic niceties.

Such is not the case.

America's partnership with Bangladesh truly strengthens each day.

Perhaps, some of you are curious about this assertion, given press reports that you might have seen recently.

I am a disciple of Martin Luther King, Jr., who often exhorted his followers to "keep your eye on the prize." I fervently adhere to his philosophy and keep my eye fixed on the prize of promoting America's partnership with Bangladesh, to the benefit of the people of both countries.

Let me present to you the case that I made to my Non-Resident Bangladeshi (NRB) friends on the breadth, depth and strength of the US-Bangladesh partnership, which is the most productive bilateral relationship of my 33-year Foreign Service career. This partnership has helped Bangladesh make history in so many amazing ways.

The partnership has helped put Bangladesh on a trajectory to achieve its Millennium Development Goals by already slashing maternal mortality by over 60% and child-under-five mortality by nearly two-thirds. This success was evident a couple months back when I visited a diarrhea ward in a Faridpur hospital. Recalling my time in Bangladesh 15 years ago, I expected to find sick children jammed two to a bed and spread across the floor and hallway. Instead, I found half of the beds empty during peak cholera and diarrhea season. I was amazed as the head nurse explained that the disease no longer kills. Similar success in combatting respiratory disease was made clear to me at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital by the doctor in charge of the pediatric surgery ward who explained that children no longer die from pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. In fact, Bangladesh has made so much progress in defeating infectious diseases that drowning is now the number one cause of death of Bangladeshi children between the ages of one year and five years. Can you imagine this?

The partnership has also helped to enable Bangladeshis to have the family size they want, which has reduced the fertility rate from 6.3 live births per woman in 1971 to around 2.2 today. Further reductions could take the rate to replacement level of 2.1 live births next year. Bangladesh is on a path to make global history as the first major emerging country to voluntarily achieve replacement level fertility. Record books will need to be rewritten to reflect this great achievement.

As a farmer at heart, I am deeply moved by the partnership's success in helping Bangladesh improve food security through expanded food production and greater access to food. Bangladesh is now exporting 50,000 tons of rice to Sri Lanka this year ... what an achievement for a country once famously described as a basket case! Bangladesh is no bottomless basket; in fact, it is an overflowing basket of agricultural bounty. I have met some of the over 2.2 million farmers who are increasing their yields

while cutting their production costs by using deep placement fertilization. Our partnership has also introduced more than 370,000 farmers to new, improved seed varieties. The partnership has successfully promoted mechanization of agriculture. Over 90 percent of tillage is now mechanized, so land no longer lies fallow for want of labor to plow the fields. Who imagined that Bangladesh would be on a trajectory to achieve food self-sufficiency?

The partnership has helped Bangladesh mitigate for the effects of climate change. Two days ago I visited Madarbunia Chakma Para village in Cox's Bazar and saw firsthand the success of partnership in encouraging people to protect rather than destroy the forests that buffer Bangladesh from the effects of climate change. Elsewhere I have seen villagers raise their homesteads above flood levels, by using soil collected by digging out fish ponds. I have seen other farmers using saline-tolerant, flood-tolerant and drought-tolerant seeds to adapt to the impact of climate change.

America and Bangladesh work together to strengthen the nation's democratic institutions and respect for human rights. The partnership bolsters local government and other institutions of governance. The partnership helps the police transform the philosophy of policing to one based on engagement with the community. The partnership works with RAB to introduce greater accountability for officers' conduct.

The partnership continues to yield great results in enhancing the nation's security. Our two nations cooperate closely to confront the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism, which threatens us both. The partnership has enabled the Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Coast Guard, and the Border Guard of Bangladesh to better secure the nation's maritime and land borders to stop trafficking of people, drugs, and arms, to interdict terrorists, and to protect maritime assets. I am pleased that the partnership has created a Bangladeshi version of the Navy Seals and has so enhanced maritime security that robberies in the Bay have fallen by 70%, insurance rates have fallen by 40% and Chittagong is no longer categorized as a high risk port. Last December, America gave Bangladesh a 378 foot cutter, the largest ship in the Bangladesh Navy; next spring America will turn over a second sister ship. These two ships will enable Bangladesh to better control its waters.

The partnership also helps Bangladesh prepare for disasters. Before I arrived, we had already built or rebuilt nearly 550 cyclone shelters, and during my tenure we have built or are building another 130 shelters. I am really proud of this legacy, which provides life-saving protection to the good people of Bangladesh. We also work with Bangladesh on preparing for an earthquake.

The clock is ticking too fast, so I must move on, but I think that I've made my point that America's partnership with Bangladesh is rich, varied, vibrant and successful. I could not be more pleased.

At this and other forums, I have often spoken of my belief that Bangladesh could be and should be Asia's next economic tiger, the Royal Bengal tiger. My ventures to all of Bangladesh's 64 districts and visits to so many factories have convinced me that Bangladesh has the makings to become an economic powerhouse.

Let me elaborate.

A tiger has four legs ... so, too, does the Bangladesh economic tiger of my vision.

The first leg is the apparel industry. In the wake of the Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashions disasters, Bangladesh now has an unprecedented opportunity to take this industry to global standards in terms of fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights to freely associate and organize. Never before anywhere in the world have the brands, ILO, development partners, workers, many owners, and government come together to support transformation of this critical sector. It is for Bangladesh, especially the owners and the government, to seize this opportunity by giving dynamic leadership to this transformation process, particularly respecting the rights of the workers, so Brand Bangladesh becomes a Premium Brand, a Preferred Brand, the Best Brand, the Biggest Brand in the global apparel market.

The second leg will be shoes and finished leather products. Just last week I visited the new tannery park that is taking shape in Savar ... wow ... the effluent treatment plant is huge, and when it begins to come on line next year it will revolutionize Bangladesh's access to the global shoe and leather products market. Two weeks ago I did a digital video conference with leaders of America's tanning, leather and shoe industries, and they are keenly interested in connecting to Bangladesh in many ways: providing equipment and supplies to the new tanneries coming up in Savar, exporting massive quantities of high-grade American hides, and sourcing shoes and leather products from Bangladesh, once the tanning sector has shifted from Hazaribagh to the eco-friendly tanning complex in Savar. I believe Bangladesh's shoe and finished leather goods exports will be huge as high quality, competitively priced Bangladeshi leather products flood into the American and other markets.

The third leg of the tiger will be generic pharmaceuticals. I have seen with my own eyes the amazing work underway by leading Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies to penetrate the American pharmaceutical market. I believe that Bangladeshi generic pharmaceuticals will begin to trickle into the American market before the end of next year; I believe, too, that this trickle will become a flood as Bangladesh ramps up to become a major supplier to the American pharmaceutical market. In my old age, I will be nursing my health with made-in-Bangladesh drugs.

The tiger's fourth leg is information technology, especially software development. Bangladesh can provide quality software at about 60% of the cost elsewhere. The owner of one software company here in Dhaka told me that he has enough interest from American software buyers to ramp his business up to 1000 employees due to Bangladesh's competitiveness. Similarly, Bangladesh could compete for back office accounting and other support for American business. The challenge in this sector is finding qualified staff who have needed English language skills.

A tiger, of course, needs more than just legs. My vision of the Bangladesh economic tiger includes frozen shrimp, small freighters, flowers, bone china, jute products, silk products and so much more.

So, with all of this potential to become Asia's next economic tiger, why is Bangladesh not a tiger now? This is a question that I answered at length during my AmCham remarks in Chittagong a couple of months back.

To recapture the highlights of that address, I see three major areas of challenge to Bangladesh's becoming an economic tiger.

First is the need for an education revolution that would bring highest quality education to Bangladeshi children across the nation, beginning in pre-school. I believe that such a revolution is possible if Bangladesh endeavors to create teachers of passion who are the best and brightest, who are well educated, trained and supervised, who are well compensated, with special incentives for living in remote areas. I believe, too, that classrooms need access to high-speed internet to give students access to a global virtual library and to bring in the best teachers electronically.

The second set of challenges relates to the infrastructure. We all know the need for improved and expanded roads, railroads, ports, power supplies and energy supplies.

The third set of challenges concerns governance. These, too, are well known to us and include corruption, red tape, lack of rule of law, and the threat of political instability.

All of these challenges are serious, but each is resolvable with sufficient commitment and good will from the government and other stakeholders. As these challenges are overcome, I believe the stage will be set for massive inflows of investment both from domestic sources and from overseas. In this context, I see potential for dramatic increases in trade and investment from America and elsewhere. Such investments are essential for the birth of Asia's newest economic tiger.

I conclude this, my final, presentation to the American Chamber with great hope, with great optimism that the Bangladesh that we all know, the Bangladesh that we all love so deeply will become an Asian tiger. I see this great tiger, the Royal Bengal tiger, strutting powerfully across the global economic stage.

As that tiger grows and becomes ever more powerful, Bangladesh will become a middle-income country where all have access to safe housing, ample, nutritious food, quality healthcare and good education.

As that tiger grows and becomes ever more powerful, Bangladesh will become the Sonar Bangla of our shared vision ... Bangladesh will become the Sonar Bangla of our shared vision.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*